

LUXURY TOURISM IN PORTUGAL RELYING ON AMERICAN VISITORS



High-end North American visitors of Portugal increasingly seek authentic rural experiences and prefer accommodations in smaller hotels.

Tourism in Portugal is growing and attracting more visitors each year. Many of them are wealthy US citizens who are looking for a "new luxury" experience. According to the National Statistics Institute, in June 2019, 81.7% of passengers who arrived at Portuguese airports were foreigners, with a total of 2.6 million people. After Europe, the American continent was the second main origin, accounting for 9% of all arrived passengers, an increase of 11.7% compared to the previous year. This increase is good news, as the average consumption of an American is double that of a European. Experts point out that a wealthy American can easily spend two or three thousand euros a day in Portugal.

And what do these relatively new tourists seek? Luxury? Let's be practical. A customer accustomed to purchasing luxury items will likely visit the countries of origin of the big brands, such as France, Italy, or the UK. Experts also point out that luxury today is vastly different from what it was 20 years ago. We're now discussing "new luxury," associated with unique and exclusive places.

Many luxury travelers now seek simplicity, authenticity, and a revival of Portuguese ancestral customs and traditions from their grandmothers and great-grandmothers. In essence, they desire a contemporary reinterpretation of local traditions that have survived up to the present day. This is what luxury tourism means to them.

Regarding the American market, tourists choose to stay, and the space around them is crucial. The Americans seek to experience the region, discover the destination, and engage in activities such as walking with a shepherd or catching limpets on the beach with a fisherman. This market has a shorter history than ours, and it is primarily interested in understanding the roots and origins of things and learning about Portuguese heritage.

Although five-star hotels with various amenities are still in demand, there has been a surge in the popularity of "independent hotels" with between 20 and 50 rooms. These spaces tend to blend in with the place's authentic surroundings, which is what guests who seek new luxury are looking for. It is an immersion in the destination, and luxury is defined by time, silence, feeling, and the ability to walk barefoot.

Selling national Portuguese know-how

According to WTTC (the World Travel & Tourism Council), tourism is expected to contribute 17.4% to the national GDP this year, with a projected annual increase of 3.4% over the next decade. By 2032, the sector is expected to account for 20.2% of the economy. Portugal's rich history, spanning 800-900 years, is a valuable asset that must be effectively marketed as a brand of excellence and luxury.

Maintaining the sale of Portuguese originality with exceptional quality will prove to be very successful. However, consistency is crucial to selling national brands of excellence or luxury. It is one of the key elements for success in luxury items, as consistency must be maintained in everything. Luxury items take time to produce, and the person who recognizes quality and is willing to pay extra for it is the one who ultimately decides if a product is luxurious or not.

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